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## Press Release

### *Pattern Recognition*

*Shortlisted artists for the Young Artists of the Year Award*

20 January - 18 March 2016

Private View: 19 January, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Exhibition Open: Tues-Sat, 11am-6pm, FREE

The Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW



Showcasing the best of emerging contemporary art from Palestine, The Mosaic Rooms present five new works and one special performance by selected artists shortlisted for the A.M. Qattan Foundation's prestigious Young Artist of the Year 2016.

The artists were challenged to break loose from familiar representations of art created in the Palestinian context, and to explore the notion of repetition and pattern to develop fresh approaches.

Here the artists present six very different contemporary responses to this notion. The pieces range from the deeply personal, a video of a family history that is retold over and over, to the cool forensics of a speculative sci-fi mystery.

Curator Nat Muller says "Pattern Recognition looks at how 'repetition' can be used as a strategy to explore the grey zones between fact and fiction, original and copy, ruin and repair. These are pressures that in some form or other Palestinians deal with on a daily basis, from "facts on the ground", to the viability of a Palestinian state, to the cycle of violence and reconstruction. In the exhibition 'repetition' becomes an emancipatory tool for articulating an alternative imaginary that reconstitutes old and familiar patterns in the representation of Palestine."

The Young Artist of the Year Award is a biennial award which provides a platform to celebrate emerging artists from Palestine, early in their career. The shortlisted artists worked intensively with curator Nat Muller to develop their projects in response to this year's theme. The works vary across media from video, installation, to sound performance. Asma Ghamem's sound piece can be experienced in a one-off live performance on 24 February.

The outcomes are rooted in the artists' individual experiences of Palestine, where geographies, histories and identities are fragmented. However the works play out preoccupations – displacement, resistance, the blurring of truth – which resonate in today's wider world.

The exhibited artists are: **Inas Halabi** (first prize winner) **Somar Sallam** (second prize winner), **Asma Ghanem** (third prize winner), **Noor Abed**, **Majd Masri** and **Ruba Salameh**.

There will be an associated programme of events running throughout the exhibition.

### **About the curator:**

Nat Muller is an independent curator and critic. Her main fields of expertise are: contemporary art from the Middle East; the politics of image representation; media art; art and food. Her writing has been published internationally and she has written numerous catalogue and monographic essays on artists from the Middle East. She has curated exhibitions and other projects in Europe and the Middle East, as well as video and film screenings for festivals including Rotterdam's International Film Festival, Norwegian Short Film Festival and Video D.U.M.B.O. In 2015 she was Associate Curator for the Delfina Foundation's Politics of Food Program in London. Nat is contributing editor at *Ibraaz*.

### **About the artists:**

**Inas Halabi - Mnemosyne, 2016** (YAYA 2016 Award Winner) Video, 13,55

The starting point for this project is a scar on the forehead of the artist's grandfather. The scar was a result of a bullet shot in his direction by an Israeli soldier in the late 1940s. Focusing on myth and the construction of memory, members of the same family are filmed narrating their own version of the event.

Halabi graduated with a BA from the Ceramic and Glass Department at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem (2011) and an MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London (2014), Inas Halabi is the winner of YAYA 2016.

**Somar Sallam - Disillusioned Construction (second prize) Video**

This video project shows aspects of construction and fragmentation. A crocheted patchwork blanket is completed, only to be unraveled and destroyed over and over. This piece is based on the artist's personal experience of displacement and the unravelling felt after a "period of disillusioned stability" as refugees.

Somar Sallam (b. 1988, Syria) graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus (2010). Sallam's work has been shown in Algeria and Syria. Sallam is also an illustrator for children's publications, receiving first prize as a contributor to *Freelestinie* at the International Comic Festival in Algeria in 2015.

**Noor Abed - The Air Was Too Thin to Return the Gaze, 2016.** Video and mixed media installation

'On 8 August 2015, a rumor spread of people sighting an unidentified flying creature over the village of Bir-Nabala, northwest of Jerusalem.' The artist collected and interrogated evidence of this (fictional) local sighting. Her installation shares some of the ongoing research she has undertaken.

Noor Abed (b. 1988, Jerusalem) received a BA from the International Academy of Arts Palestine and a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles. She was accepted onto the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program in New York in 2015-16. She has shown in London, New York, Los Angeles, Norway, France and the Jerusalem Show V.

**Asma Ghanem - Homeland is...** Sound performance, live on 24 February.

An improvised live performance which seeks to render audible the disillusionment and stagnation of the Oslo process. Begun in 1993 the process was intended to lead to a negotiated agreement with Israel, Palestinians thought it would bring about an independent state. The post-Oslo period has been primarily represented through images, Ghanem attempts to represent its contradictions with experimental music.

Ghanem (b. 1991, Damascus) graduated from the International Academy of Arts Palestine and received her MA in audiovisual arts from ISDAT, Ecole des Beaux Arts de Toulouse, France. She has participated in exhibitions, residencies and workshops in Europe, the USA, the UAE, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.

## **Majd Masri – Haphazard Synchronizations** Acrylic on canvas, prints, collage, gun and jasmine flowers

This installation uses an iconic 1970's photo of a Palestinian female fighter in military fatigues with a flower between her lips, to take us on art historical journey through Palestinian art to explore how artistic practices were affected by political and social events since the Nakba. Drawing on the work of seminal Palestinian artists and genres, the original photo is transformed in six iterations of artistic styles from Greek icon painting to the political cartoonist Naji al Ali.

Majd Masri (b. 1991, Jerusalem) graduated from Al Najah University in Nablus with a BA in painting and photography (2013). She has participated in workshops and group exhibitions in Palestine, Norway and Denmark. Masri is a member of the administrative committee of the Young Artists Forum in Ramallah and the Palestinian Association of Artists.

## **Ruba Salameh – Yamm [Open Sea]** Video, 19'16 and postcards.

This video work captures Ruba Salameh's repeated return to a bus stop in East Jerusalem where a billboard of the sea of Gaza provides a fading backdrop to the waiting passengers and passers by. The work ties together the fragmentary nature of Palestinian geography, loss and the act of waiting.

Salameh (b. Nazareth, 1985) completed a BFA and MFA in Fine Arts at Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem. She has participated in residencies including in Aarau, Switzerland and exhibited internationally in Pilsen, Czech Republic and the Opera Gallery, Hong Kong (2015).

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- Images and interviews available on request.
- The Young Artist of the Year Award forms part of the A.M Qattan Foundation's Culture and Arts Programme. It is a biennial award that provides a platform to celebrate and develop emerging artists from Palestine early in their career. It is named after the late Palestinian artist, Hassan Hourani, who passed away in a tragic accident in August 2003. Nine artists were selected for the 2016 prize, six of the shortlisted artists including the three prize winners are shown here.
- Entry to the exhibition is free. The Mosaic Rooms are open from 11am-6pm Tuesday to Saturday.
- There will be a one-off performance of Asma Ghanem's Homeland Is.. performed live on Friday 24 February.
- The exhibition will be accompanied by a public programme of talks and events.
- The Mosaic Rooms are a leading London-based non-profit cultural organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from and about the Arab world. They provide an international platform for the arts, particularly new work, and create opportunities for collaboration and professional development between artists, collectives and organisations from the Arab world and the UK. They do this through their free-entry contemporary art exhibitions, multidisciplinary events, artist residencies and engagement programme. They work in partnership with national and international organisations to disseminate their arts programme to the widest possible audience. The Mosaic Rooms' programme is run by Rachael Jarvis, Director. The Mosaic Rooms forms part of the A.M. Qattan Foundation.
- The Mosaic Rooms are located on the corner of the Cromwell and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London.